

opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all said no."

But the decider wasn't listening. The reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It is easy for the Iraqis to rely on us to do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future.

The President didn't like what he had heard, the decider being an adherer to the military chain of command, so General Abizaid is being shown the door. As a Lebanese American who is fluent in Arabic, I think his understanding of the region far exceeds that of any of the advisers that the President may be depending upon to make this misguided proposal to escalate the war.

General Casey has also been removed as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. It started with General Shinseki, who told the President he would need 500,000 troops to occupy the country and avoid the abyss into which we have fallen, a civil war, insurrection, insurgency. He also was fired because the decider didn't believe his advice.

It is time to change course in Iraq.

And the President is not only continuing a failed policy and sending more U.S. troops to a mission that is very unlikely to succeed, according to the advice of his uniformed commanders, who he is ignoring, he is also going to undermine the effort in Afghanistan.

Things are going bad in Afghanistan. Remember, that is where Osama bin Laden planned 9/11. That is where the Taliban supported and harbored al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. We, with NATO and the world behind us, decided to take them out. Remember that? Osama bin Laden, dead or alive; dead or alive. You don't hear that from the White House much anymore.

But Osama bin Laden is still planning attacks on the United States, and the one-eyed Omar is coming back to Kandahar. They are planning a spring offensive. They didn't withdraw this winter. The NATO forces are ineffectual. And what is the President's response? He is going to withdraw U.S. troops from that region.

So we have the heart of darkness, Afghanistan, and the President is ignoring that problem to continue his failed policies in Iraq. No escalation of the war in Iraq by the adherer-decider, President Bush.

SUPPORT THE SAFE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, unfortunately, violence has struck our schools again. Unfortunately, this has been an increasing trend. In the past several

years, we have seen countless incidents across the Nation.

School violence is not limited to urban areas. Acts of bullying and other violent crimes occur in schools across the Nation on a daily basis. We must do something to stop this growing trend.

Our current reporting system on school violence is severely flawed. Under current law, school violence stats are collected through surveys and self-reported data. This data is not the most current data available and does not provide an accurate view of the situation.

The FBI has developed a system of reporting that is both comprehensive and up to date. This system is referred to as the NI-BERS System. It collects the data, details of crime incidents, and is a much greater tool to prevent school violence. Accurate data is valuable to addressing this issue. It allows our school administrators to see the true impact of school safety programs and it provides the basis for need-based school funding.

In response to these issues, I have introduced the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act. My bill, referred to as the SAFE Act, moves reporting data from surveys to real crime stats in the NI-BERS System. This move will allow schools to accurately address school safety issues.

It will also ensure that funding is allotted to the schools that need it the most. Our schools do not have the resources that they need to combat school violence. President Bush has constantly cut funding for the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program. These cuts have left our already-overburdened schools without the money needed to stop school violence.

The SAFE Act will restore funding for our schools through a need-based grant program. Schools that do not have a safe climate will receive grants from the Department of Education. That money will be used to update school safety programs to curb the needless acts of violence and make our schools safer for our children. If we are serious about school safety, we must not only implement new reporting measures but must fully fund our schools.

The SAFE Act is endorsed by the National Parent and Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the National School Safety and Security Services.

Congress has sat and watched as schools across the country have attempted to deal with school violence with insufficient data and little to no funding. We tried to correct this in Leave No Child Behind. So as we reauthorize Leave No Child Behind this year, I am hoping we will be able to implement a better program. We have an opportunity to change the way we handle school violence in this country and truly make our schools safe.

We see and hear every day about the violence, when our children are in

school and do not feel safe, and I have talked to so many teenagers and middle school students that say that many times they do not feel safe in school. We can do something, but we need a better way of reporting it.

□ 1745

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHUSTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SECURITY FOR AMERICANS AT HOME AND ABROAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House passed H.R. 1, a bill instituting the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. I am proud that the Speaker made this her first priority. It was an important first step. It was a step to strengthen America's security.

Another step we can take to provide security to Americans at home and abroad is to bring our troops home from Iraq. It is what I have been saying for several years now. In fact, this is my 176th 5-minute special order on Iraq. And it is what the American people demanded on November 7.

From the very beginning, our presence and continued occupation has brought strong opposition and violence to Iraq. The Vice President promised we would be greeted as liberators, that the troops would be hailed with cheers and flowers. Instead, the sad thing is our troops are being greeted with snipers, with rocket-propelled grenades and with roadside bombs.

Tonight, the President will announce an escalation in the occupation. He wants to send over 20,000 more troops to Iraq. In fact, we have learned just today that those troops are already arriving in Baghdad. He wants to put over 20,000 more troops in harm's way. And for what?

Tonight, the President will not announce an exit plan. Tonight, the President will not talk about benchmarks. Tonight, what the President will do is support more of the same. This is just "stay the course." Let's call it what it is: an escalation.

A majority of Americans support bringing the troops home. In fact, a recent poll showed that a majority of men and women in uniform support an end to this occupation. And yet the President wants more troops and refuses to put forth a plan to end our military presence there.

Well, the American people and the Congress have waited long enough, Mr. Speaker, for the Commander in Chief to do his job. So, on Friday, the Progressive Caucus and the Out of Iraq Caucus will host a forum with former